LODI HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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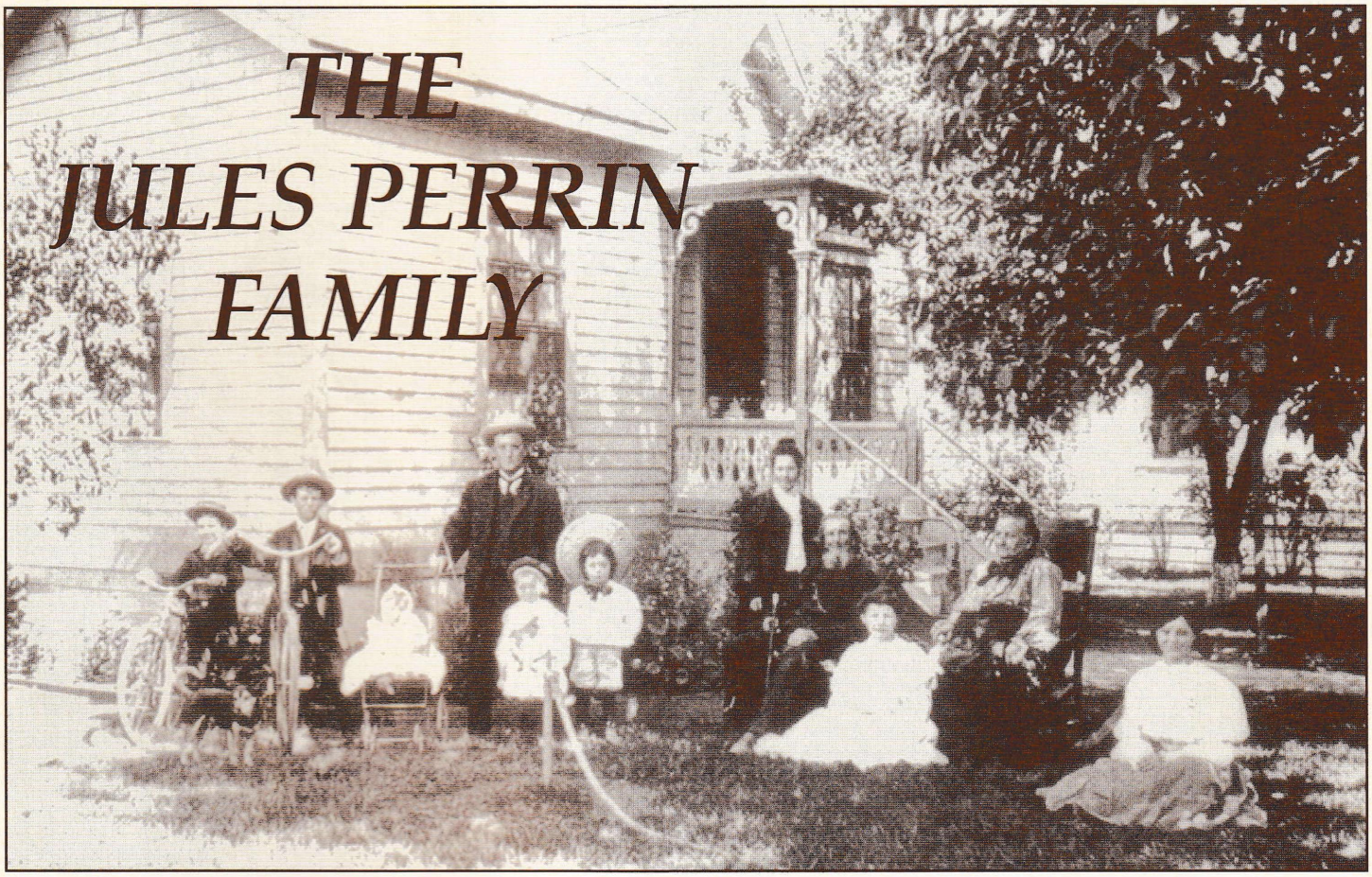
THE JULES PERRIN FAMILY



The Jules Perrin Family: Cecil, David, Cecilia, Jules, Philip, Paul, Mary Ann, Joseph, unknown, Luce and Veronica at the "Pink House" on Sacramento Street. ▲

Joseph Perrin returned to his home in Quebec, Canada from the gold rush in Australia and married Luce Delorme about 1860. Thirteen children were born to the couple of which eight survived to adulthood. The family moved to Willow City, North Dakota and all became American citizens.

The family built a store and Joseph became the Postmaster. The second oldest son, Henry, started clearing some land to farm. The area was surrounded by many rocks so he used them to build a house. That's when Henry got his first taste of masonry work. He must have done a good job building the house, as the structure was still in good condition and being used as a residence over a hundred years later.

The seventh child of Joseph and Luce was Jules, born in 1870. As a very young man, Jules became a butcher and owned a shop. He also became the owner of a bakery, a bowling alley and a restaurant in Willow City. Jules married Mary Ann Cota in 1896. Brother Henry had married her sister, also named Mary Cota, five years earlier.

After five bouts with "double pneumonia" and the second one in the year 1904, Jules' doctor admonished him to stay out of the frozen meat lockers and leave the cold north weather for a warmer climate, or stay in North Dakota and die. Jules took his doctor's advice and arrived in Lodi, California on December 4, 1904 with his wife and children plus his parents. They stayed in the recently completed Madison Hotel located on the northwest corner of Oak and Sacramento Streets.

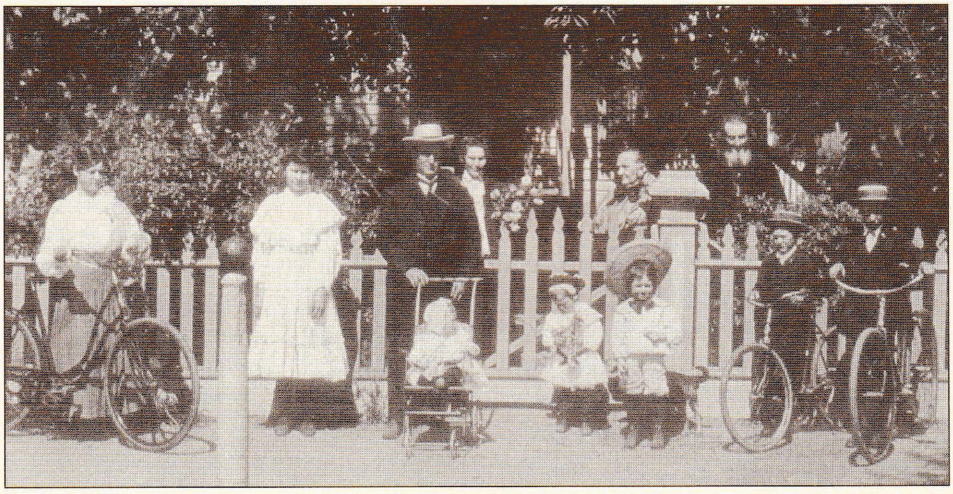
▲ *The Perrin family at 116 West Oak Street: Amelia, Grandma Luce and Grandpa Joseph*

Because of ill health, Jules was unable to work for over a year. By this time Henry had also settled in Lodi and the two formed a partnership called the Perrin Brothers Cement Contractors.

When Henry arrived in Lodi he brought cement block forms and tools. The land for the plant, lots 3 and 4 of block 29 of the original Mokelumne subdivision were located at the southwest corner of Stockton and Locust Streets and were purchased from Greer and Lena McDonald for $10.00 in gold.

In early 1900 brother Henry had moved from North Dakota to Mountain Home, Idaho. He associated with a cement contractor named Jendrin. Mr. Jendrin wanted Henry to become his partner, however Henry declined and instead bought out Jendrin, including cement block forms.

The county directory of 1905 and 1906 listed Henry Perrin living on Oak Street west of School Street with his father Joseph who was listed as a gardener. In the same listing, Jules' address was Sacramento Street south of Walnut, with children David, Cecil, Philip and Paul. Later, Veronica and Cecilia were born in the "pink" house. In 1916 the family moved to 500 Hilborn Street where Jules, Jr. was born on his father's birthdate, November 2nd.



▲ *116 West Oak, Joseph and Luce Perrin home. Behind fence: Mary Ann Cota (wife of Jules), Luce and Joseph Perrin. Front of fence: Amelia Kirby (Gilbeau), foster daughter Sue and Luce and later wife of Joseph Gilbeau (mother of Clarence), Jules Perrin, Paul Perrin, Philip Perrin, Cecil Perrin and David Perrin, Arnold Perrin in stroller.*

In 1906 Henry started building a concrete house in the rear of his parents' home at 116 West Oak Street. This was the start of a 13 year partnership with his brother Jules in the concrete business.

The Perrin Brothers, Concrete Block Manufacturers was listed on the southwest corner of Stockton and Locust Streets in 1907. This was where the "Miracle Concrete Building Blocks" were manufactured.

Each of the blocks made by the Perrins was constructed by hand, using a formula that, according to Jules Perrin, Jr. was, "four or five parts sand and gravel to one part cement plus some water." This mixture was poured into the metal blocks then laid in the sun to dry for three-and-a-half days. Each block weighed 42 pounds when dry and measured 2' long x 1' wide x 8" high. The lifting and moving of a number of blocks at one time earned Jules Perrin, Sr. the reputation of being "the strongest man pound per pound."

The formula for this block was no secret, in fact, the Lockeford Stone Company was producing this type of building material as early as mid 1907 and within five years the Cary Brothers and the Frederickson firms were also manufacturing the hollow concrete blocks in Lodi. When the Lockeford Stone Company erected a Miracle block building in Lodi they told a reporter that "the blocks ... are perfect in consistency and practically indestructible as to wearing quality ... these blocks will endure forever ... weather conditions have no effect on them." Each company bought forms for the blocks and while the inside of hollow portion was the same, the exterior style was different. The Perrin blocks, for instance, had convex designs that were instantly recognizable. The "split-face" block was used for whole walls as well as for foundations, while blocks bearing a single or double Greek laurel wreath pattern were used around windows, doors, outside edges of structures, or wherever a decorative note was needed. The interior side of the blocks, that is, the side that would face the interior of a room, had no pattern, while the third face of the block carried the inscription of Miracle Concrete Building Blocks. This logo was laid so that the mortar covered it and it was not seen by the public. Even the

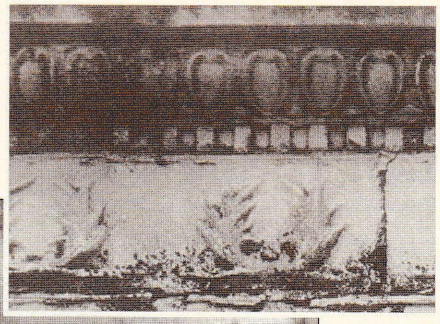
mortar design used by the Perrins was unique in that it was smooth and convex, standing ¼" to ½" out from the blocks.

The Perrin Brothers also laid bricks purchased from local brick yards as well as "cobble stones" that were used in the construction of fireplaces, chimneys and foundations.

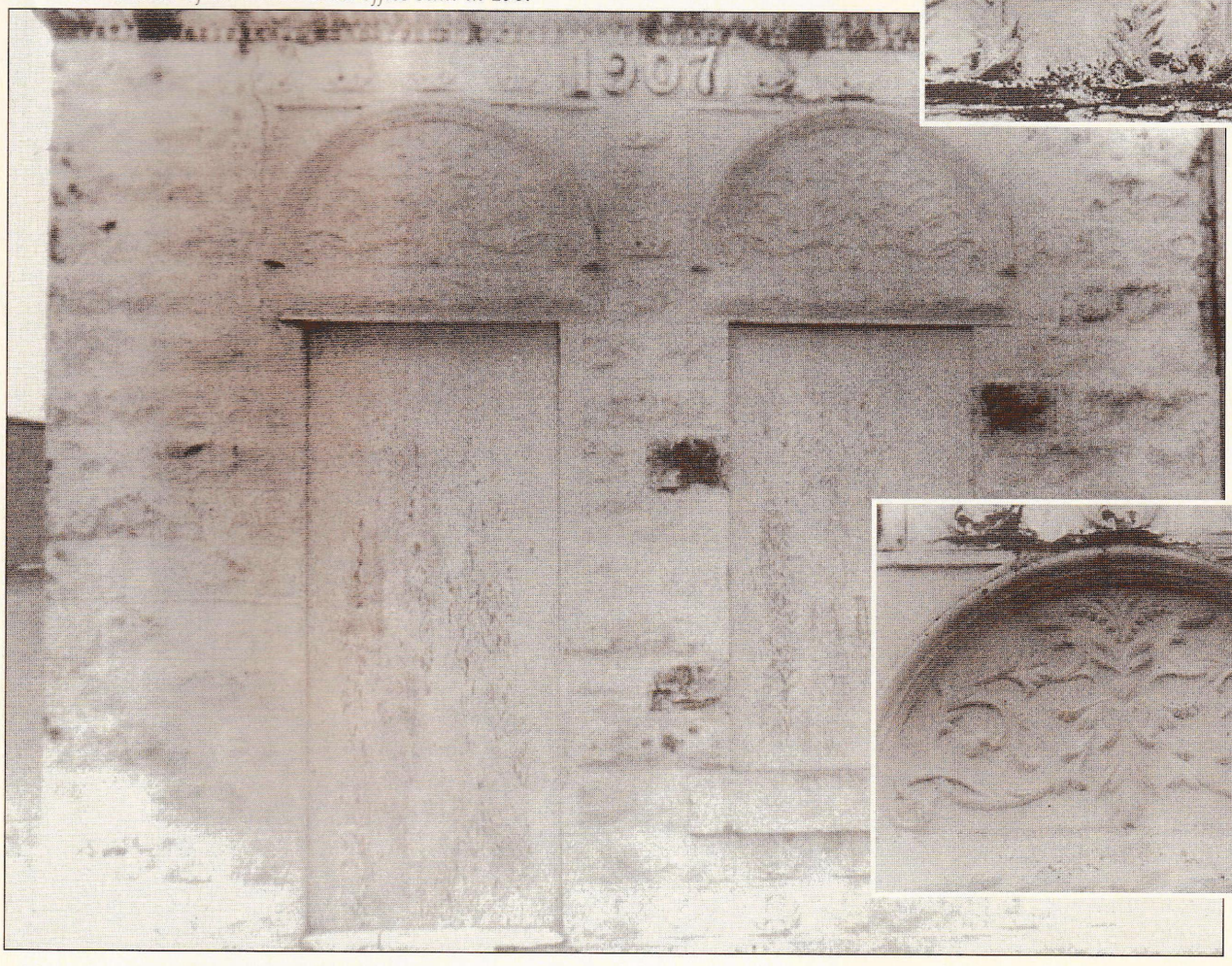
The brothers secured a number of building contracts in towns outside of Lodi, including Madera, Ione, Sonora, Groveland and Tracy where they built residences, retail stores, theaters and hotels. The blocks were made on the construction sites on out-of-town jobs, with the company hauling the cement, gravel and sand to the locations by wagons and mules. In December of 1912 the newspaper reported that two mules had been stolen from the brothers, and that the men blamed the Lodi officials for not notifying the sheriff's office at

▲ *Making Perrin Miracle Blocks, Jules Perrin, Ben and Pablo Escudia*

Close up of "dart and eggshell" design cap that appeared on three sides of the office and storage buildings, and the two Greek laurel wreaths to a block, known as double wreaths. ▶



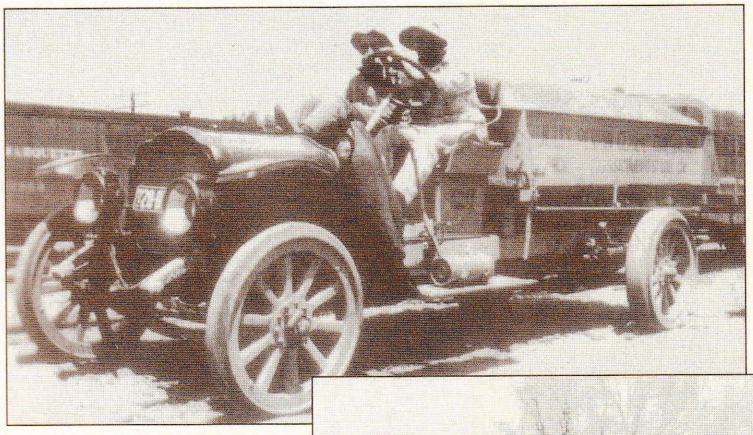
▼ *Front exterior of the Perrin Bros. office built in 1907*



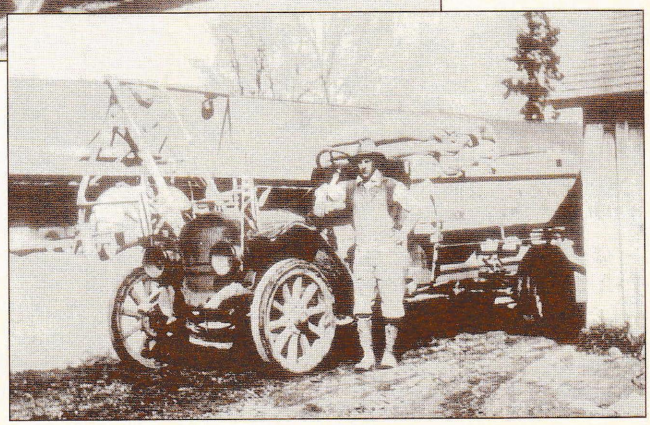
Close up of an ornamental concrete cast arch that appeared above the front door and window of the Perrin office. ▼

Stockton when the matter of the loss had been reported to them. It seems that the gate on the corral where the mules had been kept was found open. The men advertised for the return of the animals and some campers near Cherokee Lane reported that early on the morning of the theft they had seen a man in a buggy driving a couple of mules ahead of him. There were no reports of whether the critters were found. The corral and two block bars were located behind the business office of where the hay lofts, the track for the hay pulley and a barn door had been located.

Jules purchased the first dump truck in Lodi. It was a five-ton model made by the White Truck Co. It hauled all the sand, gravel, cement, blocks and necessary lumber to the various jobs. The truck was driven by Jules' oldest son, David.



◄ *First dump truck in Lodi, David Perrin, driver.*



► *1917 white truck (5 ton), solid rubber, and David Perrin (oldest son of Jules). circa 1920*

THE LODI UTILITIES

In 1891 the Bay City Gas, Water and Electric Works was furnishing gas and water for some Lodi citizens, as well as one street light near the Bay City office at the corner of Pine and Sacramento Streets. The plant location was on the southeast corner of Main and Locust Streets on Lots 1 and 2 of Block 29 which is just west of where the Perrin Brothers located at a later date.

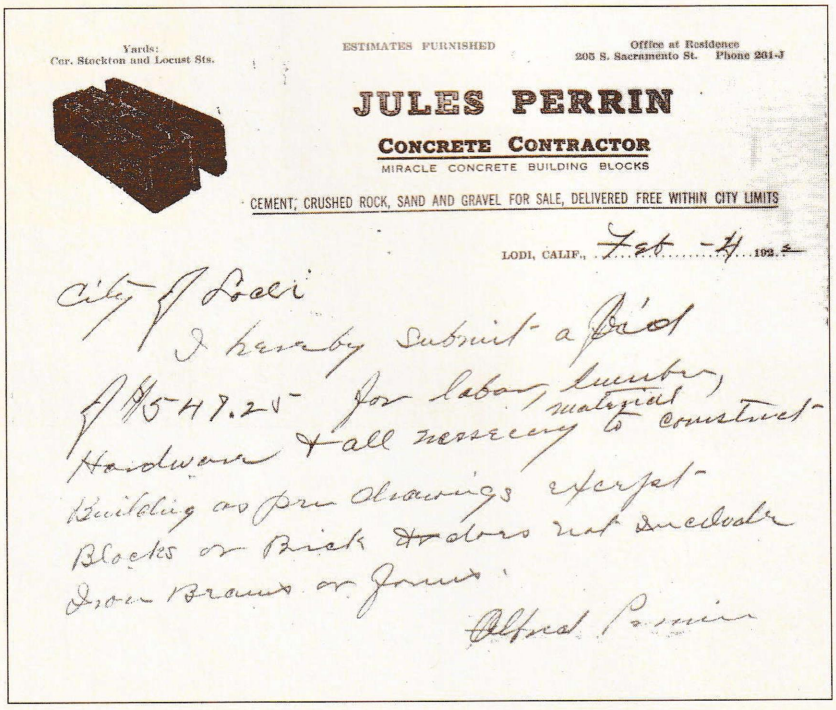
Fred and Ed Cary, twin brothers from Indiana moved to Lodi when they were 25 years of age. In the year 1893 they bought the existing water and gas company, consisting of an eight-inch well, a 15,000 gallon wooden water tank and a small steam engine.

The Cary Brothers began making improvements of a new well, a larger pumping plant and a 60,000-gallon reservoir tank. A Springfield gas machine was completed in November 1894 to replace the kerosene lamps. With the new gas mains in place, the manufactured gas was sold to citizens for $3.00 per 1,000 cubic feet. They also started an active planing mill operation at Main and Locust Streets.

In the year 1902 the Cary Brothers agreed to light the streets of Lodi with electricity and by 1905 almost everyone had power in their homes and businesses from the 500 light electric lighting plant.

As the electric works expanded, the Cary Brothers asked the Perrin Brothers to build them a 20'x 30' long cement block building to serve as a transformer station with twelve 3" terra cotta pipe openings with insulators to hold power lines. Three 18" terra cotta pipes near the roof helped ventilate the interior.

Lodi was incorporated in November


Yards:
Cor. Stockton and Locust Sts.

ESTIMATES FURNISHED

Office at Residence
205 S. Sacramento St. Phone 201-J

JULES PERRIN

CONCRETE CONTRACTOR

MIRACLE CONCRETE BUILDING BLOCKS

CEMENT, CRUSHED ROCK, SAND AND GRAVEL FOR SALE, DELIVERED FREE WITHIN CITY LIMITS

LODI, CALIF., Feb 11 1923

City of Lodi
I hereby submit a bid
of $5417.25 for labor, lumber, material
Hardware & all necessary to construct
building as per drawings except
Blocks or Brick & doors not included
Iron Brands or Jams.

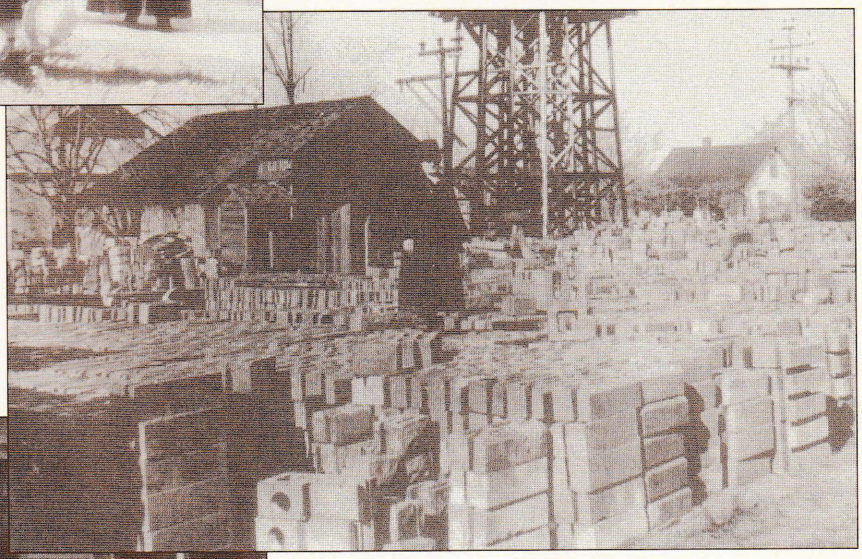
Alfred Perrin

▲ *Bid written by Alfred Perrin on Jules' business stationery. Alfred was a carpenter and the older brother of Henry and Jules.*

In the upper left-hand corner note the Miracle concrete building block with its hollow center design.

Veronica (8 years), Jules and Cecilia (5 years).

Sunday dinner at the Perrin's, 500 Hilborn Street.
Nancy Carr at far right.

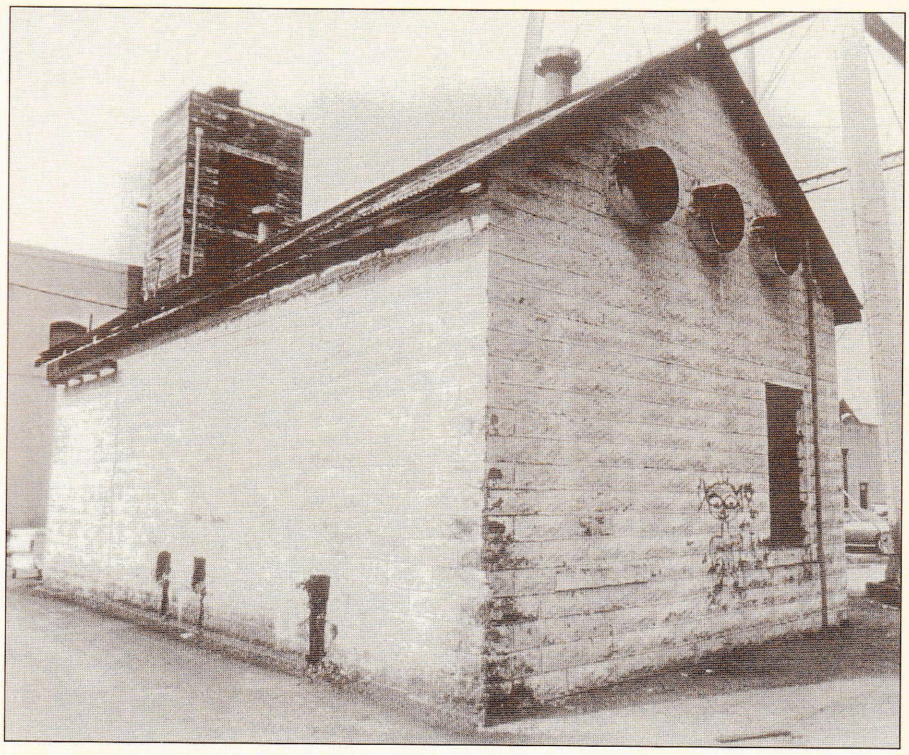


Jules Perrin standing amid piles of finished blocks in the storage yard. The plain-faced blocks were used on sides of buildings, foundations and such. These blocks would be set on pallets in a drying shed until needed. Circa 1920s.

Jules Perrin Family at the "Pink House" on Sacramento Street.

1906 and by 1910 was considering building their own utility plant. The Cary Brothers offered to sell their electric light and water plants to the city. A price of $35,000.00 was finally agreed upon for the electric and water systems, machinery and properties. It soon became The Municipal Water and Light Plant.

Five years later after the Perrin Brothers completed the building that served as a transformer station for the Cary Brothers, the building was converted to a jail for the City of Lodi.



▲ *Southeast corner of the jail, city hall, fire house and water tower in background. The 18" terra cotta pipes were used for ventilation for both the sub-station and later the jail.*

LODI JAIL

About January of 1881, the County built a jail for Lodi. It was a 12'x 16' wooden box costing $350.00 and was constructed by the County Supervisors.

In 1882 the San Joaquin County grand jury sent a committee to visit and inspect the jail at Lodi. They reported that they found it in a horrible condition. The two 6'x 8' cells were scantily nailed to 2'x 4' posts. It leaves the wall full of cracks through which cigarettes, food and tools could be passed into the prisoner. Officer James, Constable, reported that he never leaves any but petty criminals in the jug overnight without being watched.

◄ *Unusual 2½" thick laminated wooden outer jail door with the exterior bars of wood. An indentation showing where a large lock had often hit the door was visible.*

The horrible condition of the "lean to" water closet, as foul as a pigpen brought the most complaints to the supervisors.

The Grand Jury advised the county to immediately order the building of a small solid brick jail at Lodi which would be a safe and healthy monument to the power of the law.

The jail was improved but in the early 1900's there were still complaints about the condition and operation of the holding cell.

The citizens of Lodi were informed that the jail belonged to San Joaquin County with the Constable of Elkhorn Township in charge, a Mr. Hanabel B. Coleman.

In 1907 H.B. Coleman became the first Lodi City Marshall. His office was at 11 North Sacramento Street but the jail remained at 210 North Sacramento Street until early 1914 when the old Cary Bros. Transformer building was converted into a three cell jail. Each cell measured about 8'x 10' with a basin and commode, with only

cold running water. There were two circular air vents that worked only if a slight breeze prevailed.

Lodi's first owned jail was used to place offenders overnight until they saw the judge the next morning. The offenders that were arrested on the weekend remained incarcerated until Monday morning.

In 1928 the City Hall moved to a new and current headquarters. The police department moved into the basement of the Pine Street hall but the jail remained at the Main Street location, next to the City Pound. At night the dogs barked and the prisoners yelled until the firemen in the old Main Street Firehouse called police.

In 1953 the jail was condemned by the California Department of Correction for not complying with minimum jail standards.

The City agreed to lodge Lodi prisoners in the County jail for $1.50 a day. In 1955 a short term holding facility for prisoners was added to the police department quarters in the City Hall basement.

Besides being kept busy erecting buildings, Jules and Henry Perrin took on contracts from the City of Lodi to construct the foundation for a water tank as well as storage and implement sheds. In late 1910, when the city began work on sewer and water lines, the two businessmen began advertising themselves as being "licensed drain (pipe) layers." The city fathers noted that the city would furnish pipe to families who wanted to be hooked up into the city's water system and that "Perrin would do the excavating and pay for the topping. Mr. Perrin was instructed to do the work and present a bill to the city for the pipe." At a later date, Jules was hired to build the "partition walls and cement lined ditches for sludge drying beds at the sewage disposal plant." The "Mr. Perrin" that the city spoke of might have been Jules, because as early as 1910 his name appeared before Henry's in newspaper advertising, indicating that Jules, for reasons of Henry's health or whatever, was acting senior member of the firm. It is interesting to note that Jules Perrin had no work foreman and that he went around from job to job checking on the progress of projects.

Walking down many of the older streets in Lodi, even today one could see logos stamped in the cement sidewalks bearing the words, "Perrin Bros., Concrete Contractors" or "Jules Perrin, Concrete Contractor." In the early years, if a citizen of Lodi wished a cement sidewalk put down, they first had to submit a written application to the street committee. If the city approved the application, then the city engineer would order the correct grade for the walkway. After the cement was laid the engineer would inspect the work and either accept or reject it. Then and only then would the Perrin Bros. be paid.

Some of the buildings the Perrin Bros. erected were The Lodi Canning Company on Tokay Street at the railroad, The Tokay City Garage, Buchanan Sanitarium, Ford Garage and The Lodi Hardware Co. block on School Street.

Henry and Mary Perrin were the parents of twelve children, Dena Perrin Gilbeau, Louis, Joseph H., Lillian Perrin Round, Mac Perrin Pleau, Lloyd, Anna, Josephine, Walter, Laura, Elton and Lucretia.

In 1919, a year after the end of World War I, Henry sold his share of the firm to Jules and became a farmer, concentrating primarily on grapes and fruits. According to family members, one reason Henry left the company was that he had two major surgeries (one to correct an unsuccessful operation), and the constant standing and lifting was injurious to his health. After leaving the business, he tended to his many pieces of land, including orchards and vineyards on Twelve Mile Road and one on Thornton Road, eventually opening a fruit shed west of Lodi.

South side of Tokay, east side of the railroad tracks ... now the Cannery Office.

Meanwhile, Jules continued with the business under the name of Jules, Perrin, Cement Contractor. His brothers, Alfred and Octave, worked for the company at various times, as did the sons of the partners. It was Cecil Perrin, son of Jules, who made the concrete electroliers (street lights) that the city of Lodi bought in the early 1920's.

The original building of the St. Anne's School compound, the first reinforced steel, solid concrete building in Lodi, was built by Jules Perrin, Cement Contractor. The three solid concrete reinforced steel bridges between Stockton and Lodi on Highway 99 were built by him. The Farmers and Merchants Bank Building, the garage at 205 S. Sacramento Street, the Piazza Hotel that was at 205 S. Sacramento Street, Henry Perrin's home at 338 Pine Street and two of Henry's block houses that have since been torn down, the building that housed the old Shanghai Chinese Restaurant were all built by him. The sidewalks around town with his name, Jules Perrin, Cement Contractor, all attest to the fine work he did.

Alfred Perrin, eldest brother of Henry and Jules was a carpenter by trade and did all the wood work for Jules. Octave, another brother worked for the company at various times. Jules' sons all worked for him while growing up. In 1931 David was listed as a chauffeur and Paul as a foreman for Jules Perrin.

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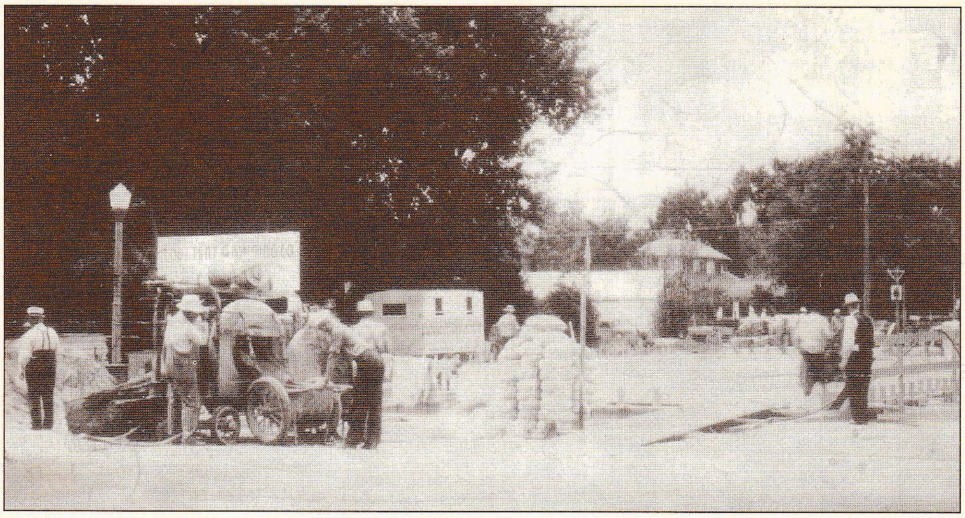

▲ *Jules Perrin, far left, crew and "sidewalk supervisor" at site of Lodi Tent and Awning Company. The crew is mixing the concrete with piles of cement sacks and sand.*

Every month the company used 30 carloads of sand from the American River in Sacramento. Jules built a three story hotel and apartment house on South Sacramento Street. David Perrin was the proprietor of the hotel for several years.

Jules added one more building at the yard on Stockton and Locust Streets. The new building was just north of the office used mainly to store sand and cement. There was seldom a large backlog of blocks on the premises as the company was constantly busy and used the blocks as fast as they were made. If there was a buildup of stock, the blocks were laid on platforms and stored in the old barns or sheds on the grounds. Alfred constructed the platforms for his brothers.

The depression in 1929 caused almost a complete halt to construction and to make ends meet, Jules had to release most of his help. He began making concrete flower pots that were 2½' x 3' high. By 1930 the firm was not manufacturing the Miracle concrete blocks because many engineers felt that the blocks were not strong enough to use in buildings. After 1932 there was virtually no work and in November 1936 Jules sold the two lots and all buildings to the City of Lodi for $7,000.00. The city eventually used the building for storage. Meanwhile, Jules continued working out of his home at 215 S. School Street until 1942 when he finally retired.

Jules Perrin was a very kind, generous and considerate man. He would gladly give you the shirt off of his back if you needed it. In fact, he built the original building of St. Anne's School for just the cost of the materials and labor and he donated the laying of the cement sidewalks on the Lee and Walnut Street sides.

Jules and Henry were not only brothers and partners, they were good friends. For over forty years the two had ongoing games of pinochle and pitch, card games they played almost every afternoon or evening at one or the other's home. Family members noted that all bids and calls of the games were done in French, their native language, a tongue they also used when speaking of things they did not want their children to know.

In October 1945, Jules and Mary Ann celebrated their golden wedding anniversary in their home. The following April, at the age of 76, Jules passed away. In April, ten years later, Henry and his wife Mary, celebrated their 64th wedding anniversary. The following month, at the age of 92, Henry passed away.

Both men were widely known throughout northern California for their membership and active participation in civic and church organizations, but most of all, they were highly respected for their excellent workmanship and practices as well as their devotion to their families.

REFERENCES

CAREY BROTHERS
Evelyn Cary Hassbaum

LODI'S SECOND JAIL
Amber Smith

HISTORY OF THE PERRIN FAMILY
Cecilia Perrin Ravizza & Laura Perrin Stiles